IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 20-24, as follows:

1   20. (currently amended) An apparatus for etching a tapered trench in a layer of material,

2 said layer of material having a mask <u>on</u> ~~adjacent~~ a surface thereof<u>, said mask</u> having an opening

3 defining a location on the layer of material at which the trench is to be formed, said apparatus

4 comprising:

5   an etching tool <u>adapted to enlarge</u> ~~for performing~~ vertical etch process steps on

6 said layer of material; and

7   an opening enlarging tool <u>adapted to enlarge</u> ~~for performing steps of enlarging~~

8 said opening in said mask, said etching tool and said opening enlarging tool <u>adapting to operate</u>

9 ~~operating~~ in an alternating manner <u>in order</u> to form a trench of a desired depth in said layer of

10 material.

1   21. (currently amended) The apparatus according to Claim 20, wherein said mask

2 comprises a resist layer, and wherein said mask opening enlarging tool <u>is adapted to perform</u>

3 ~~comprises a tool for performing~~ resist <u>layer etching</u> ~~etch process steps~~ on said resist layer.

1   22. (currently amended) The apparatus according to Claim 21, wherein said resist layer

2 is tapered around <u>a</u> ~~the~~ periphery of said opening<u>.</u> ~~to facilitate performing of the resist etch~~

3 ~~process steps.~~

1   23. (currently amended) The apparatus according to Claim <u>20,</u> ~~21,~~ wherein said <u>etching</u>

2 ~~vertical etch process~~ tool and said <u>opening enlarging</u> ~~resist etch process~~ tool are incorporated in a

3 tool that operates in a pulsed manner.

1   24. (currently amended) The apparatus according to Claim <u>20</u> ~~21,~~ wherein said <u>etching</u>

2 ~~vertical etch process~~ tool and said <u>opening enlarging</u> ~~resist etch process~~ tool are incorporated in a

3 tool that operates in a multi step manner.